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THE OPIUM TRADE IN THE DUTCH EAST INDIES

I

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Among the many grave problems which face the American government in the Philippines, one of the very gravest is the opium problem. Its solution depends on Congress, for whose information and guidance has been submitted the report of the commission¹ appointed by Governor Taft in August, 1903, to investigate the laws regulating the opium traffic in all oriental countries, the conditions of the retail trade, etc., and, most important of all, to give its views on the possibilities of restraining the opium habit. We learn from this report, as it was published a short time ago, that the commission recommends the traffic in opium being immediately made a government monopoly, with the object of gradually restricting the opium till, after three years, it shall be imported only by the government and for medical purposes.

Pending the action of Congress, a few words on opium in the Dutch East Indies, next door to the Philippines, may be acceptable.

The harmful influence of opium can be taken for granted. One of the most complicated drugs in the pharmacopeia, it seems that exactly this characteristic makes it so highly versatile in its action on the human system, affecting as large an area of nervous surface, with so much intensity and in so many ways, as its marvelous complexity would lead us to expect.² Testimony regarding its terrible ravages in China, India, and wherever it was brought (mostly by the kind offices of European "civilization": the English opium war etc., etc.), is certainly not wanting.

¹ This commission was composed of Right Rev. Charles H. Brent, bishop of the Episcopal church in the Philippine Islands, as chairman; Major Carter, president of the Board of Health of the Philippine Islands; and Dr. Albert, a Filipino, resident of Manila.

² Horace Day, *The Opium Habit*.

An unmitigated evil, the opium habit never loosens its grip, but insinuates itself ever more. The moderate and even the minimum opium-eater is a slave to the stimulant, as the moderate alcohol-drinker is not, says the *Lancet*. And the Malays say, in their picturesque way: "First the man eats the opium, and then, after a little while, the opium eats the man."

In Mohammedan lands the use of opium is proscribed together with the use of strong drink and, among the puritan Moslemin, even the use of tobacco. Though not all so strict as Sultan Murad IV in his less indulgent days,³ we find, on the whole, that the native rulers in the islands of the Malay Archipelago, before the advent of the Dutch, did what they could, and often in a very radical manner, to protect their subjects against the baneful drug. The old historians of Java relate how Kei Aria, sultan of Bantam, determined to get rid of the "opium-suckers" in his dominion. A Javanese, who had sold some of the contraband stuff, suffered for it with the loss of both his hands and was banished to the Lampongs; the white traders, responsible for the import, were severely discountenanced.

The radjah of Lombok, to give another instance from another island where another religion prevails, took the same position against opium. In one of his ordinances we read:

The prince who rules in the land of Silaparang, wishing to issue regulations regarding the smoking of opium, in accordance with the counsel of his chiefs and nobles, together with the Brahmins and priests of Buddha and Siwa, ordains that it shall be forbidden to the members of the three castes and their posterity to use opium and all that is prepared with or originates from opium, because of the bad consequences which the use of opium certainly has. From the oldest times it is known that opium spoils the *hadat* (unwritten tradition) and brings the realm to destruction; that it is the very worst thing one can commit oneself to; it stains; it soils; it is far from producing a good disposition; on the contrary, it leads people astray; it makes that they consider only their lusts when all sorts of sinful thoughts are engendered; that they covet the possessions of others, and that many vices enter their bodies. Smokers of opium forget the duties handed down by their ancestors; they do not listen to the words of their sovereign; they neglect the teachings of God. They believe what they should not believe, they eat what they should

³ D'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'Empire Othoman*.

not eat, they partake of forbidden meat and drink. It cannot fail that they must help to populate hell if they do not better themselves in purification.

These were no idle words. We have good authority⁴ for the statement that the radjah of Lombok was in dead earnest and that he did everything in his power to keep opium out of his island. No sooner, however, had the Dutch government ousted him, after the expedition (wonderfully characteristic in many respects) of 1894-95, than opium was officially introduced into Lombok, *pecuniae causa*, as it was introduced into Bantam and the Preanger Regencies; as the first building for public use, opened in Kota Radja, under the Dutch flag, when the Dutch government had got a foothold in Atjeh, was not a church or a school or some such sentimental institution—but an opium den!

Even in these days of new light on colonial science, the Dutch have yet to learn that whatever is morally wrong never can be politically or economically right. The native rulers before the time of the East India Company held more honorable and enlightened views on that subject *in re* opium than the present Dutch government. When we are told that the use of opium was known in the Malay Archipelago for centuries, as it was known in all oriental countries, we must add to this statement that, as far as can be gathered, the native princes and princelings saw the dangers of the opium habit clearly enough and did their utmost to protect their subjects against it, with notable success. They were far from trying to make money out of vice, like the Dutch East India Company first, and the Dutch government later, "drawing its millions of gold⁵ from a fatal abuse of its subjects."

The attitude of the native princes and princelings, wherever they had a chance, remained meanwhile strictly against opium. Instances of their acting upon that principle—except for the Preanger Regencies, of which I shall speak later on—are to be found, e. g., in the traditions of the *Vortstenlanden*, so called, of

⁴ F. A. Liefcrinck, at one time resident of Bali and Lombok, speaking in the *Indisch Genootschap* at The Hague, December 30, 1902.

⁵ Tonnen gouds, more than f. 17,000,000 a year: J. De Louter, *Handleiding tot de Kennis van het Staats- en Administratief Recht in Nederlandsch Indië*.

central Java; and T. Roorda relates⁶ that the princes of Java proper, in the writs of appointment, *piagem*, given to their different subordinate chiefs, *wedanas*, *kliwons*, *panewoes*, and *mantris*, prohibited the smoking of opium, making it as penal an offence as gambling and laying wagers, falsification, the protecting of bad characters, and everything comprehended by them in the expression "evil-doing" (*slegt bedrijf*); the transgressors were threatened with "calamity" (*onheil*).

Thanks, then, to the native rulers, Java and the other islands in the Malay Archipelago, though opium was known, remained free of the opium *habit* up to 1600. Opium-eaters, afterward opium-smokers, could be met only sporadically in such harbors, on the coast of Atjeh, at Palembang, at Bantam, where foreign traders mingled with the population. The few cases on record in the interior always refer to some scion of the higher nobility, led to the vice by an exceptionally luxurious life and the contact with unscrupulous foreigners, whites more often than otherwise.

A marked change was brought about by the East India Company, not slow to seize its opportunities for gain, and as early as 1677 that honorable body made itself master of the opium monopoly for Java, declining, however, at first to enter into the details of the retail trade. The opium, bought in Bengal, was knocked down at public auction in Batavia, wholesale, to the highest bidder, who received a license for the importation into Mataram and elsewhere, and sometimes had to pay import duty in addition to his bid.⁷

But very soon all sorts of regulations became necessary to keep the retail trade in hand by controlling the license-holders and, especially, by repressing the smugglers who began to assert themselves as they have done ever since. The Dutch East India Company, later the Dutch government, securing a snug profit on the sale of opium to the natives, adventurous spirits, inclined to the faith of the *contrabandista*, did not see, and still does not see, why it should not turn what it considers just as

⁶ *Javaansche Brieven, Berigten*, etc.

⁷ De Louter.

honest a penny in the same business. Even the servants of the East India Company, and others who derived their income principally from the so-called *morshandel* (i. e., the private commerce, in all shades of illegitimacy, on the side of the crowning monopoly claimed by the company's board of directors), did not disdain the clandestine traffic in opium as a new road to wealth; and so we find, as early as 1678, an ordinance against the increasing luxury displayed by the burghers of Batavia—really an ordinance against their smuggling, and so understood in the light of an accessory measure, threatening the cause by attacking the effect.

Meanwhile, thanks to the efforts both of the East India Company and of the smugglers, the use of opium increased rapidly. It is estimated⁸ that it went up from 1/750 Amst. pound per year and per capita in 1600, when the East India Company began its work, to 1/54 Amst. pound in 1678, when the East India Company had taken charge of the entire opium trade by claiming the monopoly, and 1/39 Amst. pound in 1707. A good start! But not without some little drawbacks. The opium habit assuming its power, criminality reached a pitch formerly unknown. Many grave offenses against the law, and in particular many assassinations in Batavia, were traced to the influence of the drug. Therefore, and "because the slave who smokes opium is nearly always dishonest," the smoking of opium, and of tobacco mixed with opium, was prohibited within the jurisdiction of the city of Batavia. The demoralization of the natives outside of the city of Batavia, where they could not molest the good burghers either by killing or robbing them, did not matter in the least. On the contrary, it meant money, and nothing was left undone to insure a higher revenue from that demoralization; exactly as at the present day, only with the difference that the government of Dutch India is less outspoken about it than the East India Company⁹—in fact, adds the Pecksniffian sin to its rapacity.

⁸ J. C. Baud, *Proeve van eene Geschiedenis van den Handel en het Verbruik van Opium in Nederlandsch Indië*.

⁹ nademaal het groote oogmerk van den amphioenhandel is, de

The expectations of higher revenue to be derived from the opium trade with the extension of the East India Company's territory were not realized, comparatively speaking. And again the authorities put the responsibility on the shoulders of the smugglers, then as now the scapegoats of official miscalculations in the matter of opium. Governor-General Van Imhoff, believing that free competition in the opium trade was the only way of saving the East India Company from the *cercle vicieux* in which it moved, presented a report to the board of directors, during his involuntary stay *in patria*, 1741, setting forth his views. The High Powerful Seventeen did not quite agree, but the final outcome was that Van Imhoff, after his return to Java, founded the so-called *Amfioen-Societeit*,¹⁰ a stock company, whose shares were held, at least for the greater part, by servants of the East India Company. This *Amfioen-Societeit*, supplied with opium from the company's stores, held the monopoly of the retail trade, and could not think of any better use of its rights thus acquired than to farm them out to the highest bidder; the first instance in the history of Dutch India of rights, monopolized by the foreign rulers, being farmed out.¹¹ The first opium farmer was Lim Beeng Kong, a Chinaman, as from that time all opium farmers have been, and most farmers in other branches of indirect government taxation! The city of Batavia was still closed for opium, and when Lim Beeng Kong began to dispense the drug in small quantities (the surest way of getting at the bulk of the people), opium dens, in the sense of those infamous, officially and semi-officially sanctioned institutions, now of such unsavory repute, where *madat* may be bought or leisurely consumed, were still unknown in the districts around Batavia—as unknown as, up to 1754, in East Java. The

Compagnie daarvan zooveel mogelijk te doen gaudeeren;" because the great object of the opium-trade is to make the company profit thereby as much as possible.

¹⁰ *Amfioen*, *afioen*, derived from the Greek *ὄπιο*, means generally the opium as it is bought wholesale, *opium crudum*. In Dutch India the pure opium, *opium depuratum*, is called *tjandoe*, and the pure opium further prepared for smoking purposes, *madat*.

¹¹ Cf. Baud, *op. cit.*

refinement in the wholesale poisoning of the people came only by degrees. Nobody could expect more, even with the help of Chinese opium farmers. Lim Beeng Kong did what he could, worthily filling his place at the head of a long line, with many side branches, of worthy successors. And the leading genii of the *Amfioen-Societeit*, emboldened by the financial success which marked the beginning of the farm system, took a step most illustrative of that national foible immortalized in the old rhyme:

In matters of trade, the fault of the Dutch
Is giving too little and asking too much.

They raised the price of their opium, with the natural consequence that immediately the smugglers were heard from. Section 40 of the *Amfioen-Societeit's* charter invested its managers with the power to equip armed vessels, using them for the repression of the traffic in contraband opium; but it seems that they never availed themselves of this privilege.¹² They left the waging of open war to the representatives of the East India Company as such. And the East India Company's representatives tried hard, but did not succeed very well. The extent of the trade in *tjandoe glap*,¹³ and the assurance of the dealers in that commodity, even at that time, may be learned from one of the company's orders, dated April 29, 1746, in which it is stated that the forbidden merchandise generally was landed on the island of Bawean, the place of rendezvous for the smugglers from Malacca, Djohor, Palembang, Bangka, Blitong, Bali, Bandjermasin, and other harbors on the coast of Borneo. Sometimes, when Bawean seemed too closely watched, they changed their arrangements and met at Balamboengan or at any other convenient point on the coast of Java, where the East India Company had no means of asserting itself; but the island of Bawean, not to forget Soemanap, was considered the great stronghold¹⁴ of the gentlemen who entered into competition with the opium monopoly.

When reading of the East India Company's inability to defend its monopoly, with the profits accruing therefrom, against

¹² Cf. Baud, *op cit.*

¹³ Dark, i. e., contraband opium.

¹⁴ Cf. Baud, *Konkelnesten voor smokkelaars en lorrendraayers.*

tjandoe glap, and finishing up with the information now imparted nearly every day, by any chance number of any newspaper, edited in any of the principal towns of Java, the first impression must be that history repeats itself. This will be made clear, *luce clarius*, later on, as far as concerns the opium *regie* of the present government of Dutch India. As far as concerns Van Imhoff's *Amfioen-Societeit*, the above may suffice to show that it suffered a good deal from the clandestine trade, and when its own supply of opium was reduced from 1,200 boxes of 100 kati¹⁵ to 450 boxes, as a result of a quarrel between the English East India Company in Bengal and the Dutch East India Company in Java, it succumbed altogether. The *Amfioen-Societeit* was dissolved on the last of November, 1792. Sad ending of a dismal failure to reach the primary object of its foundation: suppression of the traffic in illicit opium, together with a minimum sale of licit opium, under a *soi-disant* monopoly, to the extent of 1,200 boxes of 100 kati per year! The following may serve as an illustration of the extraordinary pains taken for poisoning the population to, at least, that 1,200 boxes' limit. The opium farm at Batavia, for some reason or other, having reached the high-water mark, or rather the low-opium mark, of its capacity, momentarily unable to sell any more, one hundred boxes of the drug were sent to Celebes, with an accompanying letter for the governor of Macassar, requesting him to foist that invoice on the natives as soon as possible. Such requests had, as they still have, if not the form, yet the force, of a command, non-compliance with which would, as it still will, be construed into the acknowledgement of unfitness for advancement. But the governor of Macassar, who thought of his highest duties first, returned the hundred boxes to Batavia, informing his superiors that he saw no chance of disposing of the stuff, if they gave him three years for it. That governor's name, Looten, deserves to be remembered, especially in a time when advancement determines the average official's conduct, exclusive of all other considerations.

¹⁵ One *catty* or *kaddy* (Malay: *kati*) = 16 *taëls* (Malay: *tail*) = $1\frac{1}{3}$ pounds avoirdupois.

The charter of the *Amfoen-Societeit* not having been continued, after long years of hesitation the exploitation of the opium monopoly was given into the hands of an *Amfoen-Directie*, composed of a director (one of the highest officials in the East India service), two administrators, a cashier, and a bookkeeper who, at the same time, acted as *scriba* or secretary. The instruction for the *Amfoen-Directie* shows that no great changes were meditated; the whole quantity of opium considered necessary for a year was to be sold in one lot at public auction; the retail trade was left to the farmers; 7 per cent. of the net gain was reserved for special purposes; one-sixth went to the governor-general, one-sixth to the director-general, and so on—a premium to stimulate the zeal of the high functionaries for the extension of the opium habit which proved so profitable.

Other people also, however, wanted a share of the profit. This had led, except for smuggling, to an increase in the price of Bengal opium, which went up incessantly, following the increased demand.¹⁶ Such experience, together with the unpleasantness, already referred to, between the Dutch East India Company in Java and the English East India Company in Bengal, made the High Powerful Seventeen bethink themselves of other and cheaper sources of supply. Opium traders, mostly sailing under the English flag, were encouraged to bring their merchandise direct to Batavia. An experiment was made with 15,000 pounds of opium, bought in the Levant; but with little success. The governor-general and council at Batavia wrote home, asking to be excused from putting Levant opium on the Java market. The opium-smokers did not like it, and they were afraid, moreover, that the shipping of the drug in the company's vessels, arriving from Dutch ports, would induce greedy persons to send contraband opium, as already had happened, in butter-kegs, in cans, like tinned meats or vegetables, and otherwise disguised.¹⁷

At an earlier stage of the disagreement with Bengal an

¹⁶ Baud gives, e. g., the following prices: for 1760, f. 222; for 1761, f. 278; for 1762, f. 326; for 1763, f. 375; for 1764, f. 402 per *maund*.

¹⁷ "In *verbloemde verpakkingen*."—Resolution of the Castle of Batavia, January 18, 1779, and January 12, 1780.

investigation had already been ordered to ascertain if no *papaver somniferum* could be raised in the island of Boeroe, or other islands of the Moluccas, without prejudice to the spice trade, because the increase in the use of opium in Hindoostan might lead to new difficulties regarding the supply from Bengal.¹⁸ The investigation ended in nothing, and somehow the notion of cultivating the papaver plant in the Malay Archipelago for a home supply of opium, however often the subject may have been broached since 1753, has never led to even an attempt in that direction up to this day. The government struck a negative attitude (its time-honored custom in so many different phases of colonial life), prohibiting the planting of papaver in private enterprise, under penalty of confiscation and heavy fines.

Smuggling, on the whole, went on as briskly under the régime of the *Amfioen-Directie* as under the régime of the *Amfioen-Societeit*. It became so general that even the commanders of British men-of-war, who touched at Batavia, were required to pass their word of honor that they had no opium on board their ships.¹⁹ More on this subject can be read in the account of an English sailing-master who, during the last decades of the eighteenth century, not only coasted and traded, but smuggled from port to port in the Malay Archipelago, and in his later days of *otium cum dignitate* felt a call, on the strength of his twenty years' experience, to initiate his compatriots into the (not all too) secret science of landing a cargo of five hundred boxes of opium on Dutch East Indian territory, under the noses of the Dutch officials.²⁰

The *Amfioen-Directie* lasted till the advent of Governor-General Daendels in 1808. The decrease in the foreign trade, a consequence of the Napoleonic wars, had also affected the opium traffic. At the public auction of 1794 the quantity of opium sold could not be made to exceed 973 boxes (which still gave a net profit of f. 1,378,887), and the Commissaries General, trying to restore the market to the point of selling 1,200 boxes,

¹⁸ Secret resolution of July 23, 1753.

¹⁹ Cf. Baud, *op. cit.*

²⁰ H. M. Ellmore, *The British Mariner's Directory and Guide to the Navigation of the Indian and Chinese Seas.*

expressed their opinion that it was better to make a certain given profit on a large quantity—in fact, on the largest quantity possible—than on a small quantity of a certain given commodity, *in casu* opium.²¹ The old policy of great gain on small business got a new twist to meet changed conditions. But the twist was not sustained by changes in other directions. The opium traffic declined fast, and remained declining till Daendels stepped in and perfected the farming system. The farmers henceforth had to buy their opium from the government at fixed prices. This was the general rule, but sometimes, by way of exception they were allowed themselves to import the opium they wanted, paying a very high import duty. New privileges accorded to the farmers with regard to the opening of places where *madat* not only could be bought, but also smoked in due style, worked like a charm—for the benefit of the exchequer. The net profit on the opium farm, reduced to f.250,000 in 1809, was soon doubled.

Progress indeed; but, compared with the days of great lucre under the East India Company, the state of affairs looked far from satisfactory. And this gave a chance to those few, Dirk Van Hogendorp in the first place, who wanted Holland to clean itself of the opium stain. Their views found more favor than before, seeing that, after all, there was not so very much money in poisoning the natives. Thus, e. g., we find it on record that Mr. Nederburgh who, in 1794, as commissary-general, had done his level best to raise the sale of opium from 973 to 1,200 boxes, in 1803, as a member of the commission appointed to draft a new charter for the Dutch East Indian possessions, with his fellow-members condemned the opium traffic in rather forcible terms and proposed, though permitting the opium trade at Malacca, under condition that no opium should be shipped from there eastward, to prohibit the import of opium into the islands east of Java altogether and to make the import into the island of Java itself subject to an express license; while the authorities should be directed explicitly to heed, under their special responsibility, that everything be done, whenever the local condi-

²¹ Resolution of Commissaries General of October 25, 1794.

tions warranted it, for repressing or, if possible, for abolishing the use of opium in the island of Java.²²

Dirk Van Hogendorp had preached what another enlightened man, a few years later, honestly tried to do—Thomas Stamford Raffles, the inscription on whose monument in Westminster Abbey truly says that

. . . . selected at an early age to conduct the government of the British conquests in the Indian Ocean, by wisdom, vigour and philanthropy he raised Java to happiness and prosperity, unknown under former rulers.

As the historian of Java, Raffles wrote:

The use of opium, it must be confessed and lamented, has struck deep into the habits and extended its malignant influence to the morals of the people, and is likely to perpetuate its power in degrading their character and enervating their energies, as long as the European government, overlooking every consideration of policy and humanity, shall allow a paltry addition to their finances to outweigh all regard to the ultimate happiness and prosperity of the country.

As the administrator of Java during the English occupation, Raffles brought his theory into practice, being of the opinion that the direct financial losses resulting from the repression of the opium habit could be more than balanced by the moral benefit to the natives, and, as a natural consequence, their material progress.

The flag of high morality in all relations with the native population, of late more ostentatiously raised under the motto of a special providential consecration of the Dutch government to colonial duty on earth as the foundation of an ethical Dutch colonial policy, has been continually waved since the days of Raffles by Dutch ministers of the colonies, whenever they wanted to distract attention from the real government slogan: *virtus post nummos*; but the English governor of Java, the first who really brought an ethical element into the colonial policy of the white man with regard to the population of that beautiful island, was perfectly sincere about it.

²² Report of the Commission for East Indian Affairs, August 31, 1803. Baud ventures the remark that no more is heard of the advocated restriction of the opium traffic in the regulations and instructions issued later on by this commission.

Too sincere to suit his superiors. He was accused of obstructing the machinery of the opium farm, disobeying the orders that had reached him from Calcutta in April, 1813, with the definite object of lowering the opium revenue to prepare the way for his arguments when he should come with the proposition of prohibiting the use of opium altogether. The dissatisfaction with his opium policy became more pronounced after his ordinance of September 1, 1815, providing that the use of opium, after the expiration of the still running contracts with the opium farmers, would be restricted to the towns of Batavia, Samarang, and Surabaya, and the *Vorstenlanden*.²³ The authorities were afraid that such measures might prove harmful to the opium auctions at Calcutta and the sea trade between Bengal and the Malay Archipelago. They ordered Raffles to abrogate his offensive regulation, and he complied by regulation of January 25, 1816. When, in August of the same year, Java was restored to the Dutch with their other possessions east of Ceylon, the opium farm returned to them in full swing.²⁴

And the opium farm, run by Chinese opium farmers, proved such a success, with the modifications introduced by Governor-General Daendels, again resorted to, that it was gradually brought to the other islands also. In 1824 new concessions were made to the farmers; longer contracts and larger farm districts to work in; with the happy result that they felt willing to pay a higher price for the privilege of poisoning the natives. The opium habit, artificially fostered, promised much for the future.

Meanwhile the Dutch Trading Society (*Nederlandsche Handelmaatschappij*) had been founded in the same order of ideas which led to the introduction of Van Den Bosch's culture system (*cultuurstelsel*) and on the first of January, 1827, the opium monopoly was surrendered to that commercial body for certain considerations. The Dutch Trading Society imported the drug wholesale, but left the retail trade to the farmers. As far as the population was concerned, its connection with the opium monop-

²³ Regulation III, 1815, for restricting the retail vend and consumption of opium.

²⁴ Cf. Baud, *op. cit.*

oly did not bring any change; and no change came either when, on the first of January, 1833, that connection ceased.

The opium farm held the field while, with or without reference to moral motives, *pour le besoin de la cause*, every few years improvements were made in that huge machinery for squeezing money out of the natives and degrading them at the same time—improvements according to the new lights of new official luminaries, sometimes more and sometimes less productive to the treasury for its immediate wants, but always injurious to the prosperity of the population and detrimental to the economic conditions of the country.

The government kept its wholesale price of opium as high as it could in supplying the farmers, who themselves, therefore, turned to smuggling, taking their chances of enormous profits when all went well, or loss, at the government rates of the licit article, when the illicit *tjandoe glap* failed to relieve the pecuniary stress. No wonder that the sums they stood ready to pay, from term to term, for the exclusive right of the retail trade under the government monopoly, in this or that farm district or opium parcel (*opium-perceel*), varied considerably. In consequence, the amount of the opium revenue, from year to year, became very uncertain.²⁵

To meet this uncertainty, the so-called *tiban* and *siram* system was introduced on the first of January, 1834—a new departure founded on the (quite erroneous) supposition that the quantity of opium which the population “needed” was approximately known. Conformably, the quantity of the drug which every opium farmer had to take for his lot or parcel, at a fixed and, of course, not too low price, became officially determined; this quantity was called *tiban*. The quantity which afterward, in addition to the *tiban*, might be required by the opium farmer to satisfy the “needs” of the population was called *siram* and held at his disposition by the government, up to a certain maximum, at the wholesale price which the government had itself paid. The opium farm went to the highest bidder—i. e., to him who

²⁵ De Louter, whose *Handleiding* is taken as a basis for the following short history of the opium farm.

promised to pay the highest sum for the privilege of the retail sale, independently of the prices exacted for *tiban* and *siram*. These prices and the maximum quantity of the *siram* changed continually with subsequent changes in the general effect of the system on population and treasury; but, in principle, it was maintained, after 1850 even with decreasing maxima of *siram*. In 1855 came Governor-General Duymaer Van Twist, who did away with the maxima and allowed the farmers as much *siram*, at the market price of opium, as they might "in reason" require. This measure was meant as an effort to get at an estimate of the real extent of the opium habit and, principally, to deal a hard blow at the traffic in contraband opium. But that blow proved very ineffective, and the only result was an increase in the sale of *siram*, its quantity trebling within five years, while the *known* use of opium jumped from 62,000 to 105,600 kati.

This experience led to the abandonment, in 1862, of the *tiban* and *siram* system, and the introduction of the maximum system, so-called. The maximum quantity of opium to be allowed for every opium parcel was officially determined on the basis of a maximum of 87,528 kati for the whole of Java. The opium farm again went to the highest bidder—i. e., to him who promised to pay the highest sum for the privilege of the retail trade, taking his supply from the government at f. 20 per kati, with the understanding that the fixed maximum should not be exceeded. Only once the farmers saw fit to come up to that maximum. At the same time, the number of places licensed for the retailing and smoking of opium was reduced, while the extent of the areas where the government did not allow opium at all was expanded—a reactionary movement, the first and the last, not only in theory, but also in practice, which Dutch India has known after the English occupation. But the result was wholly imaginary, thanks once more to that fatal indecision which characterizes the government even when trying its very best: the *known* use of opium, truly, went down to 70,478 kati in 1869, but the traffic in *tjandoe glap* reached alarming proportions. Instead of taking the necessary steps for opposing that illicit trade Governor-General Mijer resolved in 1870 to return

to the *tiban* and *siram* system with unlimited supply of *siram*, considering that making a little money out of the sale of government opium was preferable to leaving all the profit to the smugglers, against whom all laws and regulations seemed powerless. This same line of thought led to the opening for opium of some opium-free areas. The Preanger Regencies and the residency Bantam, however, remained closed; it was reserved for the twentieth century to witness the introduction of opium into those vast regions, under a ministry that waves the flag of a special Christian mission in the Dutch East Indies as no other ministry before.

In 1871 the *known* use of opium marked 200,000 kati on the government scale; in 1872, 266,500 kati. Qualms of conscience again had to be humored, and again the supply of *siram* was limited, this time to a quantity twice the quantity of the *tiban*. Governor-General Loudon, in 1862, as minister of the colonies, having identified his opium policy with the maximum system, so called, reintroduced it on the first day of January, 1873, putting the maximum supply for Java and Madura at 117,360 kati. Since his term on the regal throne, with many changes—too many here to be reviewed at full length (in 1890, e. g., a set of thoroughly revised opium regulations appeared in the official *Staatsblad*), the opium farm continued its work under the maximum system until the time was considered ripe for an opium *regie*, theoretically conceived as an improvement, and in its practical form—that is to say, in the first conception of its practical form—the creation of the minister of the colonies, W. K. Baron Van Dedem, who meant exceedingly well.

It seemed, indeed, imperatively necessary that something should be done against the growing opium danger. The evils of the opium farm grew apace, and not the least evil was the demoralization of the civil service. The government wanted the opium farm to bring in as much money as possible, and the Chinese opium farmers carried it with a high hand, knowing that few officials, having to choose between the interest of the population and their (the Chinese opium farmers') interest, which ran almost parallel to the financial interest of the government,

would dare to cross them. "Almost" parallel, not quite; for the opium farmers entered also with great gusto on the career of opium-smugglers, and knew how to ply their double trade with the connivance of powers and dominions, deities of official heaven: bribery and corruption reigned supreme. It did not help much that the penalties on the transportation, sale, and possession of clandestine opium were steadily made more severe; that steadily more branches of the civil service were called upon to enlist officials in detective work connected with the contravention of the opium laws. The opium-farmer-smugglers, next to almighty in their resorts, throning high above mere official influence, rejoiced in the government adding so many more servants to their staffs. The traffic in *tjandoe glap* prospered, in direct ratio, as it would seem, to the number of qualified or semi-qualified official or semi-official opium-hunters, as they were commonly named. Nothing could dishearten the smugglers, not even the appointment, in 1889, of a choice man to direct the government opium affairs—an "opium-hunter-general," so to speak; an official of high rank, with long authority and a correspondingly long title, especially detailed to confound the dealers, high and low, in *tjandoe glap*.

Meanwhile the maximum quantity of opium to be supplied to the opium farmers, at the rate of f. 30 per kati, was gradually increased (to 171,780 kati in 1894), and nothing was left undone to make the farmers pay as much for their privilege as possible. When their monthly payments came in promptly, the government did not look too closely into their sharp practices with regard to the population—e. g., the opening of unlicensed opium dens—quite a common and, by connivance of the officials, almost sanctioned contravention of the law. The number of licensed opium dens was officially decided for every residency. During the short wave of righteous indignation, already referred to, their number had decreased from 2,793 to 670 for Java and Madura, with an upward tendency after 1874 (to 864 in 1894, and so on); but everybody knew—except, apparently, those whose business it was to know and to prevent—that the opium farmers sold their *madat* wherever they chose, just as they bought their

crude material, their *tjandoe*, wherever they chose, only the relatively small quantities officially supplied to them having passed the government storehouses at Batavia, Samarang, and Surabaya. As a matter of fact, all the regulations existing on paper to protect the natives, and all the fine sentiments appearing, year after year, in the colonial reports, had absolutely no practical value; nothing but printer's ink, to use a word of Prince Bismarck. The opium farmers did exactly as they pleased, with the kind assistance of the officials whose services they knew how to requite; and the government, indifferent to their breaking of the law, insisted on one thing only: that they should make the opium business pay. This has been proved in many cases. Here I shall advance no more than a single instance.

Ho Yam Lo, a wealthy Chinaman of Samarang, having his eye on the opium farm in Solo, in 1889 instructed his legal adviser to ask the high authorities at Batavia whether or not the authorities in that residency would be directed to allow in future the sale of unprepared opium, which, thus far, had not met with any obstacle, though strictly forbidden by law. The answer of the secretary of the Department of Finance was characteristic. "The government," he wrote, "cannot allow, of course, any transgressions of the law to go unpunished, but otherwise there is nothing known at our department of *any intention* to make any change in the existing conditions."²⁶ The existing conditions, even when illegal and, moreover, in direct opposition to the interest of the population, never run any danger of change when there is a little money in it. This has been sufficiently proved, not only in the history of the opium farm and now again in the history of the opium *regie*, as will be made clear later on, but also in the history of many another government institution, notably in the history of the pawnshop farm—the collection of a tax on poverty through not over-scrupulously honest Chinese middlemen. Abolished in 1870, on considerations of a moral character, it was reintroduced in 1880, also on considerations of a moral character and, *mirabile dictu*,

²⁶ Translated as literally as possible. The original words are to be found in *De Indische Gids*, September, 1892.

exactly the same considerations, good enough to satisfy the curiosity of the general public, this way or that. The real considerations, of a strictly fiscal character, never come to the surface in documents given out for the perusal of the masses.

The opium farm gradually extended its grip to the external possessions, as the Dutch East India possessions outside of Java and Madura are called, but in a different form to meet different requirements. Thus, e. g., the maximum system was not introduced in the external possessions, except for a short time in Atjeh. It has already been remarked that, almost immediately after the taking of Kota Radja, a government opium den was opened in that place as a symbol of western civilization under the Dutch flag. The Lampongs were joined in one lot or parcel to the Batavia residency, and, with local variations, the opium laws and regulations in force for Java and Madura (or, rather, enacted, but not in force), especially those concerning the transportation, sale, and possession of clandestine opium, held good, officially, wherever the opium farm appeared. The import of opium into the external possessions was generally left to the opium farmer himself, according to his needs, subject to the payment of a high import duty. The export of opium was prohibited.

It must not be imagined that the government felt inclined to wait very long for the results of the opium farm in Java and Madura, before introducing and extending the opium habit, as a means of revenue, into the external possessions. The west coast of Sumatra offers a fit illustration, and in a letter written by Lieutenant-Colonel Elout in June, 1832,²⁷ we find the following:

As a means of revenue, the introduction of opium was promoted with the help of the bayonets; the officers [of the army] were put in charge of the sale. That disgraceful trade was conducted in this way: They sold the crude opium to the native chiefs, heads of the different districts, at a certain price for a certain weight, and there lay the profit pocketed by the administration. The heads of the districts sold to the lesser chiefs, and so on, everyone taking his profit, till the opium-smoker was reached. The officers therefore

²⁷Cited by H. J. J. L. Ridder de Stuers, *De Vestiging en Uitbreiding der Nederlanders ter Westkust van Sumatra*.

received moneys, and while ready cash was not always on hand, especially because two-fifth parts had to be paid in silver, they took all sorts of objects of value as security.

Mr. Van Swieten, at one time governor of the west coast of Sumatra, stated²⁸ that, urging the abolition of cock-fighting at a *koempoelan* (meeting) of native chiefs, they assured him of their willingness to comply with his wishes in that respect if he promised his good services, using his credit with the government, to deliver them from the evil of opium. He granted their request, and the native chiefs had their way, opium disappearing; but after a while the government changed its mind again, and decided that the natives had better smoke opium as before.

Mr. Van Coevorden, at one time president of the Padang Highlands, on the west coast of Sumatra, testifies to the reintroduction of opium as follows:

During my term in office one important measure relative to this residency was taken, which affected native life deeply. A few years before, the use of opium had been generally prohibited, at the request of the native chiefs. Without consulting them, the opium farm was reintroduced. The governor, understanding that this measure was sure to create a bad impression, ordered me to assemble the chiefs, wherever convenient, for the purpose of making them acquainted with the will of the government, telling them that the use of opium had not ceased after the prohibition, and that its continuance, in view of the impossibility to check the trade in clandestine opium, had no object; that, however, it was an evil thing for the chiefs and all honest, good men to be addicted to the drug. In consequence of that order, the necessary publicity (to the motives of the government as stated) was given everywhere; but I must say that most of the native chiefs were strongly opposed to the change.²⁹

As a pretext for the reintroduction of the opium farm, fostering the opium habit, the native chiefs were told that the government felt unable to check the trade in clandestine opium. The facts in the case are, however, that the governor of the west coast of Sumatra had asked, in 1867, the same penalties against smuggling as existed for Java, with imprisonment or forced labor at non-payment of the imposed fines; that *two years and a half* later the director of the Department of Finance

²⁸ In a meeting of the *Indisch Genootschap*, The Hague, November 8, 1876.

²⁹ *Uit de Loopbaan van een Nederlandsch Indisch Ambtenaar*.

answered him—having wanted so much time to reach the conviction, he said—that the object in view could not be obtained; that severer penalties also would be perfectly useless; that therefore the opium farm had to be reintroduced as soon as possible. But the penalties, considered useless for a system which served the interest of the population, were not considered useless—on the contrary, were at once enacted—to serve the interest of the opium farm; i. e., the interest of the treasury!

This was not the only time that governors and residents of Sumatra's west coast tried to interfere for the population, when reasonable wishes, just claims, old vested rights were slighted by the central government. It happened also, e. g., when the planting of the coffee by forced labor became an almost unbearable burden to the natives; and again, quite recently, when the decision was made that they should pay direct taxes, from which they are expressly exempted by the *Plakaat Pandjang*, their original agreement with the government, most solemnly entered upon and which the free-born Malays of ancient Menang Kabau and dependencies, adhering strictly to its spirit and letter, regard as their Magna Charta,³⁰ while the Dutch government, whenever it feels strong enough, does not scruple to disregard it, in keeping with its fatal, dishonest, more-revenue policy. The government dislikes such appeals of conscientious officials, and answers them with a hypocritically worded, red-tape-bound variant on a well-known historical saying: "D—— your consciences! Make them smoke opium, plant coffee, pay a maximum of direct taxes and leave us, high-priests of the exchequer, in sacerdotal glory and peace!"

The growing sense of the moral and financial disadvantages connected with the opium farm led, in the Netherlands, to the foundation of an anti-opium league, which tried to arouse popular feeling against that institution. It might have been considered strange indeed if the anti-opium movement in Great Britain, headed by the good Earl of Shaftesbury, had not found some imitation in Holland, always ready to copy foreign

³⁰ *Plakaat Pandjang* means almost literally *Magna Charta*.

countries in the display of popular feelings and emotions which, invariably, get diluted and more often than not, in their transplantation, turn aside from the original meaning. But, then, there is a splendid opportunity for public appeals; for the appointing of committees, getting one's name in the newspapers; for a good deal of pretentious, high-sounding talk, dear to the descendants of the florid, verbose *rederijkers*.

The *Anti-Opiumbond* in Holland never got beyond the first flourish. Actual action against an institution so productive of easy profit, still dearer to the Dutch heart than rhetorical display, could not be expected; and the scandals of the opium farm remained unchecked till Mr. W. K. Baron Van Dedem, as minister of the colonies, worked out a practical solution of the opium problem in the opium *regie*. That solution came slowly, and the father of the opium *regie* never lived to see its general introduction—perhaps a kind dispensation of Providence, for his benevolent theory got so distorted in practice that certainly he would have disowned a system which now intensifies the principal evil of the opium farm, leading in its grasping rapacity to new vexation of the natives. The word of Mr. De Roo, retired director of the Department of Finance, “God, in his compassion, save Dutch India from an opium *regie*!” sounds almost as a prophecy in the light of present revelations.

He was not the only one who foresaw that any new move on the opium board would surely mean a move in the wrong direction—i. e., the wrong direction considered from the standpoint of the charitable intentions, paraded in the States General. “We know,” a member of parliament said, “where the blows will fall, when the battle between government opium and clandestine opium is going to be fought over the heads of the natives, without the opium farm as a buffer between the treasury that wants all the revenue a fostered vice is able to yield, and the smugglers who claim their share.” Solemn promises, however, that the great object of the opium *regie* was the restraining of the opium habit, finally to stop it altogether; eloquent references to the benign disposition of an immaculate government, gained the day, proving a snare and a delusion afterward. Perhaps the

authorities meant the right thing at that moment. There is a bare possibility that they misled themselves, in foolish simplicity of mind, as much as they misled the nation at large; but then the reproach of Allan Breck comes in: "Ye're ignorant [of your own ways], and ye cannae see't."

The island of Madura was chosen for an experiment. Beginning on the first of September, 1894, the government itself, through its agents, was to retail the opium, prepared at a government opium factory situated near Batavia on the old estate Struswijck. The experiment proved not such an unqualified success as parliament had been led to anticipate, especially with regard to the expectation that the government, doing away with the middlemen, the opium farmers, now was going to pocket, not only the old profit on the wholesale trade, but also the middlemen's profit on the retail trade. This, though, might be adjusted in another way, presently to be discussed. The government, undismayed, continued in its reports to represent the future of the opium *regie* in brilliant colors, pointing to a truly seductive picture of dazzling statesmanship: the opium habit to be stamped out and, wonder of the age, the government at the same time to make so much more money out of the opium traffic. The government press intensified the brilliant colors still more, and Colonial Jan, the shrewd opium-dealer, appeared in its columns to the admiring public as an angel of light.

Under the shadow of his golden wings, spread as for a flight heavenward (which was destined to end in an ugly tumbling-down), Her Majesty the Queen Regent, then at Arolsen, on June 12, 1897, affixed her signature to a bill containing one single article. This article provided for a new item on the Dutch India budget, a sum of f.56,000 to cover the first expenses for the introduction of the opium *regie* in Java. The change came gradually, beginning with some residencies in the eastern part of the island, till on the first of January, 1904, the turn came to the residencies of Cheribon, Pekalongan, Banjoemas, and Kadoe, completing the abdication of the opium farm in favor of the opium *regie*.

Meanwhile, the general elections in the Netherlands, proving

disastrous to the "Liberals" so called, had brought another party to power—a party of views diametrically opposed to the "Liberal" principles in national politics. As to colonial politics all parties are of the same view, notwithstanding election claptrap and parliamentary rhetoric; i. e., the view that the colonies have to pay, in some way, first, second, third, and last. But it happened that Dr. Abraham Kuyper, the premier of the new cabinet, posing as a Christian cabinet *par excellence*, some time before, as editor of an Amsterdam newspaper, *De Standaard*, for this purpose or that, not knowing how he might be called upon to put his theory into practice, had pronounced sentence on the opium *regie* after his own emphatic manner, forcibly advocating the exclusion of opium where no opium had been tolerated before, and a strict enforcement of the system of the *verboden kringen*, closing for opium such regions where the opium habit had not yet taken a firm hold. *De Standaard* being a publication of decidedly religious character, Dr. Kuyper's editorial remarks were freely adorned with reproaches to a Christian nation, hypocritically tainted, he said, when it comes bearing Christianity to a population of millions and at the same time with opium that blunts in their hearts all ability to receive the gospel.³¹ The position of the government under the opium *regie* was decidedly more immoral than under the opium farm.³²

It might be thought that under a cabinet with such a Christian statesman as prime minister the opinion *regie* ought to have seen its longest day; that, at least, it would be purified, shorn of its most disgraceful, most disreputable features. But no; it was, on the contrary, under the premiership of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, *ci-devant* head-editor of *De Standaard*, that the opium *regie* so loudly fulminated against, replaced the opium farm in the greater part of Java: not the opium *regie* in its first, theoretically beneficent shape, but the opium *regie* degraded in form and substance for "practical" purposes—i. e., for the greatest possibly pecuniary advantage to the ravenous exchequer; working worse havoc than the opium farm used to do, and bringing

³¹ *De Standaard* of November 14, 1888.

³² *Ibid.*, November 20, 1888.

opium, extending the opium habit, to large tracts of land where no opium had been allowed under the opium farm, the regions heretofore closed to opium, the *verboden kringen*, which the government had promised not only to keep intact, but to expand as a working-base for making the whole island of Java opium-free. This was the little device, held *in petto* to adjust the discrepancy between the great expectations of new gain on the retail trade of opium and the actual returns when again it became evident that the official administration, of no matter what, costs a good deal more than an administration without so much red tape, *in casu* the management of the opium business by opium farmers; when it became evident, also, that the opium-smugglers intended to have something to say on their own account.

The mountain district of Tenger, the residency of Bantam (7,326 sq. km.), and the Preanger Regencies (20,874 sq. km.), together about as large as the whole of the Netherlands and one-fourth of the island of Java, closed for opium under the régime of the opium farm, were opened for opium as soon as the government took the retail trade of opium into its own hands. This, to repeat it, happened under a cabinet, by way of distinction called a Christian cabinet, inspired by a Christian statesman who had thought fit, when in opposition to a former cabinet, to denounce the opium *regie* as a hypocritical artifice, pleading the extension of the areas closed for opium. A sound creed and a bad morality—that's the road to wisdom, Colonel Gordon might have added: and the road to success of a certain kind in politics.

The pretext was the same as in the case of Sumatra's west coast. The government asserted its inability to contend with the smugglers of contraband opium, its incapacity to enforce the regulations it had made. Everybody who wanted to smoke opium in the districts officially closed for opium might satisfy his desire with the greatest ease and perfect impunity. Notwithstanding the penalties threatened, opium might be had at any time in any quantity. The obvious conclusion that, if this were true, it seemed imperatively necessary to enforce the

regulations, penalties and all, much more strictly, found no favor with the government. Loudly proclaiming its impotence, the government considered the poorest excuse good enough to give the opium, under the opium *regie*, free ingress, where, under the opium farm, it had been excluded. The opium *regie*, from the government point of view, could be a success only when it brought at least as much money into the treasury as the opium farm. The Christian cabinet, talking to weariness of the ethical colonial policy it had inaugurated, showed its Christian hand by declaring opium-smoking good and lawful, the opium habit an excellent help for the purpose of moral education, higher civilization, if only government opium were used, at government prices, and not that horrid *tjandoe glap*. The vice of yesterday became the virtuous accomplishment of today, because the government saw money in it.

Under the opium farm no women had been suffered to smoke opium; they were not allowed in any of the licensed opium dens. As soon as the government took the retail trade in hand, under the opium *regie*, special opium dens were opened for women. Opium-smoking at once had become a crying need for a part of the female population; some women could not possibly do without, they *must smoke*—when it was no longer the opium farm but the government that supplied *madat*, pocketing the difference between wholesale and retail prices. The unnecessary, the uncommendable, the punishable by law, became the necessary, the commendable, the highly to be encouraged, because there was a chance of making a little more profit—welcome profit though dirty profit.

And—who will believe it?—the government maintained that all this was done simply to check the progress of the opium habit by substituting government opium for contraband opium! By a strange paradox the government claimed, and still claims, that opium can best be kept out by letting it in. And the dreaded effect, the spread of the opium in Bantam, the Pre-anger Regencies, and other tracts of land, is now actually produced through this wonderful attempt at prevention!

To condense the government argument: A certain area was

officially opium-free; non-officially contraband opium was to be had; the opium habit gaining ground, it was to be stamped out, not by teaching the smugglers respect for the law, but by entering into competition with them, bringing government opium on the market to chase out the *tjandoe glap*!

Official documents state naïvely that it will be easier to fight the smugglers in Bantam and the Preanger Regencies, restricting the opium habit, when those residences are open for opium, than when they are closed. The opposite seems more logical. Is it easier to defend a fortress with the enemy inside or outside the walls?³³ And the opposite is proved by what actually happened. Thanks to the high price of the government opium, the smuggler's trade is now in the most flourishing condition, his commercial star in the ascendant. For one transgressor who gets caught now and then (more often than not a low acolyte of the real transgressor, furnishing the capital and remaining out of sight), a hundred others are never touched. The government stands exactly as powerless against the smugglers as ever before; nay, more powerless under the opium *regie* than under the opium farm, for reasons later to be explained. Too parsimonious to organize an efficient police force on land, with a sufficient number of swift steamers, well manned and well armed, for a close watch on the coast line, everything is left to an opium service ridiculously equipped and most unreliable. The government of Dutch India has not yet learned that regulations are absolutely valueless without the will and the power to enforce them. This accounts also for the self-inflicted certificates of impotence it produced *in re* the opium regulations for Bantam and the Preanger Regencies, trying to explain the conflict between its good intentions, the theory of the opium *regie*, loudly proclaimed for foreign consumption, and its scandalous practice, poorly excused with a whining *non possumus*. Holland pleads inability to do what she should do as a colonial power: rule wisely and well; but proves withal such a sharp customer in money matters that even her shortcomings, in neglect of duty,

³³ W. Elout van Soeterwoude in *Nederland*.

are made a vindication of financial tricks, tending to injure the natives morally and physically through the propagation of vice. And all the while she poses as the colonial elect, intrusted with a special mission to civilize, to educate the natives to a higher life; her foul actions giving the lie to the Christianity she professes.

It has already been shown how the native rulers of Bantam stood with opium. A short sketch of the opium traffic in the Preanger Regencies may give supplemental information with regard to the attitude of the native chiefs at a later date, after the English occupation. When R. L. J. Baron Van Der Capellen, in 1824, began his campaign against opium in the Preanger Regencies, then under his care, he found the regents not only willing to help him, but very zealous indeed to further his plans, though the government, with cunning generosity, had interested them financially in the sale of the drug. Van Der Capellen belonged to the short-lived school of colonial statesmen, like Dirk van Hogendorp and Jean Chrétien Baud, who declared openly that they had "imbibed" their liberal principles of colonial policy during the English occupation.³⁴ This proposition, of course, was strenuously opposed by the authorities, especially by the director of the Department of Finance, whose objections, however, were met by such arguments as this, that the sale of opium in the Preanger Regencies did not amount to much anyway, and overcome, at last, by the consideration that the opium habit led to the smuggling of coffee—i. e., to the abstracting of coffee, planted by forced labor, from delivery at the government coffee *goedangs*. The natives, when they wanted to buy opium, sometimes sold the coffee they had to produce under forced labor (and for which the government paid them either nothing at all, or a very inadequate price with a very large margin for government profit) to coffee-smugglers (export), who harassed the government coffee monopoly as the opium-smugglers (import) harassed the government opium monopoly. This argument clinched; monopoly coming into conflict with monopoly, it was no longer a complicated problem of

³⁴ P. Mijer, *Levensberigt van Jean Chrétien Baron Baud*.

morality and "thrice darned sentiment," but a simple problem of arithmetic: which Monopoly paid best?

Financial calculations decided the government for coffee against opium. The native chiefs, whose financial interest was on the side of the continued use of opium, being in charge of the retail trade, from which they derived snug emoluments to encourage the opium habit, showed themselves above such calculations, and Resident Van Der Capellen could write to his brother, Governor-General Van Der Capellen, in a letter, dated August 24, 1824, that he found their attitude with respect to the sale of opium as generous as he possibly could desire, proving their willingness to co-operate with him, earnestly and faithfully, to oppose the use of opium through all efficient means. A little farther in the same letter the governor-general's attention was drawn to the fact that the regents, magnanimously sacrificing to some extent their own interests for the sake of contributing to the prosperity and morality of the population, "request Your Excellency to receive my [the resident's] proposition with favor, and pray Your Excellency to abolish the sale of opium in their regencies and to prohibit the importation of that drug in this residency."

We know the manner in which the government was brought to acknowledge the advisability of Resident Van Der Capellen's *mésure*; we know also its excellent effect upon the moral and material progress of the Preanger Regencies, soon a model residency. So much indeed that the words *verboden kringen* (areas closed for opium) became a sort of shibboleth, the policy of the closed door *in re* opium being systematically pursued. In an official communication of June 26, 1861, the secretary of the government, Wattendorff, called the reduction of the number of opium dens and the extension of the regions within which the use of opium was altogether prohibited, the *verboden kringen*, the two most powerful means for checking the opium habit. When the director of the Department of Finance, in 1870, beset by fiscal difficulties, wanted to touch these opium-free areas, the residents, whose residencies were affected by his proposals, rose

up against him as one man. They wanted, on the contrary, an extension of the *verboden kringen*.

The resident of Batavia pleaded for a prohibition of opium, not only in the districts of Jassinga and Tijibaroesa, but also in the districts of Buitenzorg, Paroeng, and Tjibinoeng; remarking that the government ought to prefer a loss of f.100,000 a year to the moral ruin of the population.

The resident of Banjoemas wrote that the native officials, during and after the new prohibitory regulations, had given themselves a great deal of trouble to fight the opium habit, and would feel *maloe*—ashamed—if the use of opium were again permitted.³⁵

The resident of Tagal wrote at a later date:

From this measure alone [strict prohibition of the use of opium] it is to be expected that a population which, in many respects, still must be considered in a state of minority, can find salvation against continuous degeneration, physically and mentally. And even if it be that, as a consequence, millions less are paid in (i. e., directly, for indirectly increasing prosperity and development of the country will prove sufficient to restore the loss), according to my conviction this financial drawback may not outweigh the much greater drawback that the population is demoralized in ever increasing degree (1).³⁶

Still later, November 28, 1889, the minister of the colonies, Keuchenius, said in parliament:

I have given the governor-general to understand how desirable it is again to increase the number of *verboden kringen* and not to augment the number of opium dens. The governor-general, in conformity with the advice of the Council of Dutch India, has created a few very small opium-free areas, in consequence of which measure the residency of Bantam, like the residency of the Preanger Regencies, from now on will be closed against opium. This resulted in the opium dens, there situated, being given up. And this is the only decrease in the number of opium dens brought about by this opium system. It was certainly impolitic to increase the number of the already existing opium dens there where the government wished to oppose the abuse and the extension of the use of opium. If there are more opium dens than [are] allowed by law, such opium dens are opened against the law, and it is left to the administration in Dutch India to maintain the regulations in this respect.

³⁵ Correspondence between the governor-general and the director of the Department of Finance.

³⁶ Communicated by Van Dedem in the *Indisch Genootschap*, The Hague, meeting of November 3, 1876.

The number of testimonies in favor of the beneficial effect of the *verboden kringen* might be multiplied indefinitely. Those already given seem, however, sufficient, and it may be worth while now to proceed to the proof that the government, using such a meager excuse as its inability to cope with contraband opium, when throwing open the Preanger Regencies for government opium, was itself the principal agent in clearing the way for the smugglers. Not only that they were encouraged by the slowness and laxity characterizing the (non-)enforcement of the regulations against which they sinned, but, as everything connected with the government proceeds in a slipshod manner, they even received a direct invitation to flood the Preanger Regencies with *tjandoe glap*.

This happened under Governor-General Otto Van Rees, when the so-called *Preanger-transport*—i. e., the privilege of the transportation of government produce and other goods, coffee, salt, etc., in the Preanger Regencies—was farmed out, for a period, beginning on the first of January, 1887, to a Chinaman—and which Chinaman? The opium farmer of Cheribon!

Everybody knew, except the authorities whom it concerned and who, no doubt, had their reasons for not knowing—everybody knew, some even were bold enough to say beforehand, what this necessarily must lead to. And it came as the inevitable comes.

Particulars are to be found in the newspaper press of those days (especially in *De Locomotief* of Samarang, the *Bataviaasch Handelsblad* of Batavia, the *Soerabaya-Courant* of Soerabaya) and in the proceedings of the *Soekaboemische Landbouw-vereeniging*, an association to further agricultural interests, meeting Thursday, July 14, 1887, in the clubhouse Soekamanah at Soekaboemi.³⁷

The secretary, Mr. G. W. Eekhout, draws the attention of those present to the dreadful propagation of the opium evil in

³⁷ *Tijdschrift van Nijverheid en Landbouw*, Vol. XXXV, which also contains an account of the proceedings of the *Nederlandsch Indische Maatschappij van Nijverheid en Landbouw*, meeting October 12, 1887, at Batavia, where the same subject was brought up for discussion.

the Preanger Regencies. Everybody foresaw this when on the first of January (1887) the *Preanger-transport* came into the hands of the opium farmer of the residency of Cheribon, also interested in the transportation of the government mails between Cheribon and Bandoeng (capital of the Preanger Regencies); and the result has shown how well founded the apprehension was. Most of the opium cases in revision with the court of justice at Batavia (tried in the lower courts and sent up in appeal) originate in the Preanger Regencies, and every moment clandestine opium is confiscated in quantities, the one larger than the other. It is, however, worthy of notice that many of those confiscations take place near the post-cars used for the transportation of the government mails between Cheribon and Bandoeng. The most extraordinary tricks are invented to escape the vigilance of the police. And that vigilance leaves much to be desired. How, otherwise, is it possible that one of the secretary's acquaintances, at the principal locality of the district of Tjijondari, in the neighborhood of Bandoeng, could buy without any trouble, through his servant sent out for the purpose, one guilder's worth of *tjandoe*, from a Chinaman who did not even hold a license for being there at all.³⁸ This, of course, was reported to the authorities. But he (the secretary) asks: Is this sufficient? If in the Preanger Regencies, the smoking of opium can be restricted to a few Chinamen and Javanese,³⁹ there is not so very much harm done. But if the Sundanese⁴⁰ gets into the habit, and in consequence is depraved and ruined, the (European) planters (dependent on the natives for their labor supply) also have to face a future which most of them as yet can hardly realize. And there is a good chance for things to go in that direction; according to information from Bandoeng, the Sundanese are already beginning to smoke opium.

³⁸ Chinamen are excluded from the interior unless the privilege of settlement is specially granted; they even need a permit for a visit of ever so short a duration to the interior. But government regulations in Dutch India, theoretically excellent, have not the least binding force in practice.

³⁹ More strictly, the natives of Java proper, central Java.

⁴⁰ The natives of the "Sunda lands," the Preanger Regencies and contiguous regions in western Java.

A member (Mr. Burger) asks whether it is good policy to draw the attention of the government to the increase in the importation of opium into the Preanger Regencies. Might it not lead to the government to hit upon the thought of introducing there the opium farm?

The president (Mr. Mundt) considers this impossible. He does not believe that the government is capable of such a thing. It would be a most scandalous action.

The scandalous action of introducing opium into the Preanger Regencies under the opium *regie* was reserved for a Christian cabinet in the new light of the twentieth century.

The opium of the opium *regie*, it is true, must find its way, according to the theory of the new measure, not to the natives, but to the Chinamen (who, if the regulations were enforced, would be told that they had no business whatever in the interior of the Preanger Regencies), and to the soldiers of the different garrisons who "need" opium badly (just as women need opium badly since the government retails the drug). And the government considerations go on to state that the spread of the opium habit cannot constitute a danger to the Sundanese population because the Sundanese does not smoke opium. But this assertion finds direct contradiction in the statements of men who know the Preanger Regencies excellently well, members of the *Soekaboemische Landbouwvereëninging*, who have spent their lives there and are better acquainted with land and people than the government officials; in fact that, before the Bandoeng plateau was made a center of military activity; before the advent of opium—"needing" soldiers; before John Chinaman conquered the Preanger Regencies, calmly defying the regulations; before 1824, and the *mésure* of Resident Van Der Capellen, assisted by the native chiefs, opium had been smoked by the Sundanese population for the benefit of the East India Company and of the government, its worthy successor.

Chinamen and opium—supplementary articles of contraband! To what extent, may be read in an official letter, dated Bandoeng, August 4, 1887, from the resident of the Preanger Regencies to the assistant-resident of Soekaboemi. Opium and smokers of

opium, he says, are mostly found on the borders of those districts where the government not only tolerates but even supplies the drug; furthermore, in the capital and along the main roads, where Chinamen have settled and travel up and down. But farther in the interior opium is still rarely used, even scarcely known. Resident Heyting wrote this after close observation of the terrible ravages caused by the opium habit in central and eastern Java, and he declared his firm intention to defend the beautiful residency then in his charge (the Preanger Regencies) against the opium evil. But his firm intention broke down, because it lacked support from higher authorities. The want of purpose in government again became evident when, talking a good deal about protecting the natives, it neglected everything tending to keep the Preanger Regencies opium-free in fact. It was satisfied with big words in official reports which found their echo in parliament, meanwhile leaving a free hand to Chinamen and their official partners in the opium business. The result? A missionary pointed it out with sufficient clearness: "Some time ago we remarked in the presence of a member of the judiciary that the Preanger Regencies gave little trouble to the courts and the police. He answered: 'So it used to be, but things have changed—opium has come.'"⁴¹

⁴¹J. L. Zegers, *Het Opium-Vraagstuk in Nederlandsch Indië*.

[To be concluded]